

On 14 February 2004, a team of officers, directed by Major General Antonio Taguba, conducted the following interview. Major General Taguba was appointed as an Investigating Officer under the provisions of Army Regulation 15-6, by Lieutenant General David D. McKiernan, Commanding General of the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC), to look into allegations of maltreatment of detainees, detainee escapes and accountability lapses, at Abu Ghraib, also known as the Baghdad Central Confinement Facility (BCCF). The panel also inquired into training, standards, employment, command policies, and internal policies, concerning the detainees held at Abu Gharib prison. Finally, the panel looked into the command climate and the command and supervisory presence

The following persons were present:

MG Antonio M. Taguba, DCG-CFLCC, Interviewer  
COL [REDACTED], Lackland AFB, TX, Member  
LTC [REDACTED], CFLCC-SJA, Member  
SFC [REDACTED], U.S. Army MP School, Member  
MSG [REDACTED], Recorder

The interview is summarized as follows:

I'm Sergeant Major [REDACTED] social security number is [REDACTED]. I am the Interim Brigade CSM, and by MTOE I'm still also the Brigade Operations Sergeant Major.

I reported to Uniondale New York towards the end of June last year, 2003. August 3, 2003 I arrived in Kuwait, and was assigned to the 800<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade. I was an Individual Replacement, and I replaced SGM [REDACTED] who retired either April or May 2003 as the Operations SGM. He retired and I was sent here to replace him. I was not associated with the 800<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade prior to this assignment. I worked up at Garrison Command at Fort Leonard Wood in the Operations Section there.

My MOS is 31B, and I have not worked with any unit like the 800<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade, nor do I have any experience with Internment and Resettlement Operations. My preparation for this assignment consisted of reviewing the IR FM, 3-14-90. I was not given any specific guidance as to my responsibilities and duties from anyone in the 800<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade. As an Operations Sergeant Major I knew what my

skill sets were. My immediate supervisor was Major [REDACTED]. I met with the Brigade CSM and we did not discuss my duties and responsibilities. We discussed that he wanted me to keep him informed of issues concerning soldiers and any serious operational issues such as soldiers being injured or anything he could help out with.

Major [REDACTED] did sit down with me once I got up to Baghdad. He discussed with me that he wanted me to provide oversight on the NCO part, and I helped draft up FRAGO's, and he told me to perform the Sergeant Major job.

I used every opportunity to assess my duties and responsibilities as it related to the 800<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade. I knew that there had been a previous case of detainee abuse at Camp Bucca, as I heard about that as I was in processing at Uniondale in New York through conversation with other members of the unit as well as the local newspapers.

I knew where the battalions where and what their jobs were. The battalions were set when I arrived in theatre. There were a few battalion moves between August and January. I was not involved with their moves. It was already set before I arrived. Major [REDACTED] and his assistant OPS officer did the planning and execution. I did not get involved with the orders preparation or planning sessions that Major [REDACTED] was involved in. I was not personally involved from one mission to the next with the battalions.

A lot of the mission of the 800<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade was related to Internment and Resettlement. Even though parts of the mission was not doctrinal, there are certain references, policies, to which the units most abide with. Some of those are the treatment of humans, human rights, Geneva Convention Codes, proper treatment of prisoners per the FM, and standard Army policy regulations, and Army values. I am vaguely familiar with AR 190-8. I am familiar that the Geneva Convention needs to be posted where it is visible to both guard and prisoner and in the language of the prisoner or detainee.

I am familiar with the established SOP called Detention ROE. I was not here, but I'm almost positive that there was ROE training before I arrived. Since I arrived to the 800<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade, at least one modification to the ROE, and it was around the November timeframe. It was disseminated to all of the units via a FRAGO. A new ROE was sent out

and we created some vignettes to go with the new ROE. The units were instructed to train all personnel in the new ROE and vignettes, and to ensure that they were posted in all their guard towers and facilities.

I interacted with each of the battalions Operation Sergeants frequently, some battalions more than others. This was due to some battalions Operations Sergeants being only involved in just tracking movements, and their officers were more involved with the actual movements. I was involved with the receipt of reports from the battalions to the brigade. The principal reports that were required by the brigade were: SIR's or SALUTE reports, and these were forwarded up to CJTF-7. Also, Troop to Task reports were used for the S-3.

Reports involving detainee accountability and management were rolled by the S-1. The S-1 handled this because it dealt with personnel not necessarily operations. This may not be the right answer, but that is the procedure that was in place when I got to the brigade. Most of the SIR reports that were submitted involved: IED's, mortar attacks, prisoner escapes. A ballpark figure of prisoner escapes that happened from the time I reported to the brigade was maybe 16 reports of escape. Once I received those reports the staff would be briefed and it would be sent up to CJTF-7, and then a subsequent report would be prepared. Sometimes General Karpinski would launch a 15-6, or an inquiry. I can't recall getting any reports of detainee abuse. The reports were filed on email.

My appointment as the Interim Brigade Command Sergeant Major was due to CSM [REDACTED] being suspended and later relieved of duty. General Karpinski asked me if I wanted the job as Interim CSM, and I accepted. I did not read the report on CSM [REDACTED], but I knew the circumstances. CSM [REDACTED] made some false statements under oath, and allegedly had an illicit relationship with a subordinate, and possibly misappropriation of a government vehicle. General Karpinski told me of this when she asked me to be the Interim CSM. General Karpinski told me to make sure that soldiers were taken care of and do some of the things that her previous CSM hadn't done to include training and mentoring soldiers and NCO's.

I went to all the battalions and had an NCO call with their CSM's and all available NCO's. I told the soldiers that I

was the new Interim Command Sergeant Major. I did not go into detail of the circumstances of CSM [REDACTED]' relief. I told some battalions that CSM [REDACTED] was relieved. When I did my NCO call, every battalion had a CSM. I asked General Karpinski why she picked me over some of the other senior battalion CSM's. Before General Karpinski asked me if I wanted the position, I thought CSM Scanlon was in the door waiting to be the brigade CSM. Her decision to choose me caught me by surprise. Even CSM [REDACTED] had mentioned to me that General Karpinski had mentioned to him that she asked him to be the brigade CSM. General Karpinski told me that the 530<sup>th</sup> MP Battalion had moved from Camp Bucca to Ashraf and because of the mission up there, their battalion commander told General Karpinski that he really needed CSM Scanlon up there. She also told me that their battalion commanders needed the other CSM's, and that there were several that she did not have full confidence in to give them the job as brigade CSM.

I do not recall any extra emphasis being given to the brigade with regards to directing improvements with the conduct of senior leaders eliciting sexual acts with junior subordinates. When I went out and did my NCO call, I had a few subjects that I went over. One such subject was about NCOER's. Another class was on awards, but the key class I gave was on conduct and discipline, and making sure that soldiers were doing the right thing. As the Interim CSM, I did not get out to the battalions as much as I wanted too. The S-3 was short handed. During the two month that I was the CSM, I visited the battalions at least once, and some of them more than once. I was the Interim CSM and I also helping out in the OPS SGM position. The OPS section was short of enlisted and officers. I continued to help them when I could. The S-3 was authorized six total folks and we averaged six folks.

General Karpinski did not indicate that being the Interim CSM would be my principal duty, but I know she wanted that to be my principal duty. As much as she and I wanted it to be my principal duty, I couldn't always make it my principal duty. I told Major Cavallaro that I was now the Interim CSM, and he was not happy about that due to the shortage of personnel in the S-3 section. He was happy for me that I was given a leadership position. Major Cavallaro did not go to General Karpinski and ask her to allow me to work both jobs. Anything that was Brigade CSM focused was always first, and that was clear with Major [REDACTED]. I

don't recall having a talk with General Karpinski with regards to my sharing my time between working as the S-3, OPS Sergeant Major, and the Brigade CSM. I should have had a talk with General Karpinski about this. I think I did more in the two months that I was Interim CSM than probably was done for a long time. I had NCO Call, I had a promotion board, sent soldiers to PLDC, got projects built inside some of the battalions to improve soldiers health and welfare. My priority was the brigade. When I wasn't actively doing something for the brigade, working for one of the CSM's, working on a mission, I would walk over to the S-3 section and help out if I could.

When I made my visits to the battalion I went back and gave my observations to the entire staff. During the 1700 Staff meeting I would stand up and give the pulse of the battalion. I would tell of any infrastructure problems that the S-4 needed to work on. I would talk about any S-1 problems. General Karpinski and I talked about problems that arose in the battalion on several occasions. I didn't think everyone in the battalion was happy, but I thought there was a lot of good information going up and down.

Most of the time morale wasn't high. I would go up into the towers and stand and talk with soldiers for up to 45 minutes. Soldiers told me that they were tired of being there, tired of being in towers, tired of being short handed, tired of seeing people being REFRAD due to the 24 month rule and no one comes to replace them. Some of the positive comments were that the facilities were improving daily, Internet café, and heat in the rooms, among others.

I would describe General Karpinski's leadership style as direct. She is an authoritarian, not a passive leader. When issues are brought to her she is direct. General Karpinski reemphasized the treatment of detainees in a policy letter. I am familiar with the two policy memo's, one dated 5 October 2003, titled, "Proper treatment of the Iraqi people during Combat Operations and the other dated 12 December, 2003, title, "Dignity and Respect while conducting Operations. I don't recall that a command directive to tell the units to read to everybody those memo's nor do I recall anyone telling us to post them for all to read. It may have been done though. When Abu Ghraib became an enduring camp everything started to flow in. As to living conditions at Abu Ghraib, a lot of the soldiers were living in the cells. We wanted to get

trailers for the soldiers. This was hindered by the mortar attacks. A mess hall has been put in as well as a MWR room.

I knew that the 205<sup>th</sup> MI Brigade was directed to be the FOB Command for the Abu Ghraib prison. It did raise my curiosity as to why that happened. We had a Battalion Commander there that was in charge until a full Colonel was moved in with the 205<sup>th</sup> MI Brigade. I did not make an effort to meet the 205<sup>th</sup> MI Brigades CSM. I used all my efforts to meet with the 800<sup>th</sup> CSM's and its soldiers.

As far as knowing the operational status of the 320<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade, I made as much an effort as I could to deal with issues when they came up. I know the importance of Abu Ghraib in relation to the other Battalions in the 800<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade. We needed more force protection at Abu Ghraib. This would have had to come from CJTF-7.

I was at Abu Ghraib visiting the Battalion there more time than any other Battalion. I am familiar with Colonel [REDACTED]. I had met him several times. Right now the morale is lower in the 320<sup>th</sup> MP Battalion than it was before. Overall morale of the battalion was maybe "medium." I knew that the 320<sup>th</sup> Battalion was the battalion involved in the detainee abuses at Camp Bucca.

I was out at Abu Ghraib several times and I met with General Karpinski about some of my observations. One of the observations had to do with meeting SFC [REDACTED] when he came down and did his assessment with General Rider. We discussed weapons out in the compound area. I did follow ups with regards to this issue with weapons. Weapons were still in the compound because that was the decision that was made. For weapons to stay in the compound tents. I recommended that weapons be removed. The battalion commander and his S-3 officer said that the only thing that keeps inmates from coming over the wire into the compound tent during mortar attacks was them being able to have 9 mils. They went and spoke to the CG behind closed doors, and came to a compromise where they could still have their weapons but they must carry them in their cargo pockets. The weapons had to be concealed. If it was my decision, I would have went without weapons.

[The session recessed at 1306 hours, 14 February 2004.]

[The session resumed at 1326 hours, 14 February 2004.]

The other Sergeants Major told me they were supportive of my assignment, but I know that they would have reservations without telling me. I spoke to each of them individually and all of them said they were fully supportive. I'm sure there was some resentment inside. I would probably feel a little slighted if I was a CSM and an SGM was the Brigade CSM.

Accountability of detainees went up through the S-1 channels unless they come up shorthanded. Then they would send it up to operations with the circumstances. There is a Brigade TACSOP but it doesn't go into detail about detainee accountability. General Karpinski is confident that her commanders have good policy for headcounts. I would ask on my visits how they did their headcounts and all of them were by ISN at breakfast, lunch and dinner. The jails run by the Iraqi Corrections officers did it themselves.

The S-1 maintained a database by numbers by each facility and on a daily basis. The report broke down the raw numbers in several ways. The database was massive. Major Garrity worked late each night updating it. The reports were forwarded to PMO and they may have forwarded them to CJTF-7, but S-3 did not. Same for SIRs, and they would go to the LNO.

I helped resource getting soldiers up for additional training the SFC [REDACTED] was providing as a refresher course. SFC [REDACTED] team selected specific days that they could be available and we sent out the information to all the battalions so they could send representatives to this training. The battalions sent their representatives so that they could go back and train the trainer. I don't think there was an established deadline to have the training completed. There was an initial directive telling the battalions about this training. There was not validation process with the training. There should have been. I don't recall any validation process with any of the battalions to see if and when the training was completed.

With regards to the 320<sup>th</sup> MP Battalion and morale problems no special or specific instructions were given to me by General Karpinski to pay more attention to this particular battalion than the rest. I do not know if any special training of instructions were given by the S-3 of the Brigade, Major [REDACTED] right after the incidents.

As the senior enlisted advisor, there was a bond between the brigade commander, General Karpinski and me. She trusted me, and I trusted her. This was a good command relationship. I know that General Karpinski did not have a great deal of respect for the former CSM of the brigade, CSM [REDACTED]. This was because of the allegations about him, and the fact that he was never around. It was obvious to everyone that there was not a good relationship there.

With regards to the alleged abuses of detainees at Abu Ghraib prison there was not an effort to canvas the brigade, or to try and quell rumors. There was not a special mission to do that. I spoke with all of the CSM's and let them know what was going on. Because this was an ongoing investigation we did not talk about it to the whole brigade. I personally didn't go to talk to soldiers about this because I was told not to talk about it by General Karpinski, as it was an ongoing investigation.

I have knowledge about the detainee abuse. What was relayed to me was that there was some horrific things done. I was told that there were nude detainees, bags over their heads, MP's in the pictures, that sort of thing. I did not see any pictures, or CD's about this.

Everyone saw or knew that the people in the senior leadership were suspended or relieved. Some of the individuals were: Colonel [REDACTED] SGM [REDACTED] 1SG of the 372<sup>nd</sup>, and the SFC NCOIC of the night shift at Abu Ghraib, and the Company Commander. I had no knowledge of any follow on information about the suspension of these individuals by General Karpinski. The initial time that she briefed the staff that there was an issue, I was not in that meeting. One of my NCO's let me know that there was an issue and the CG talked about it. As far as giving particular guidance about the incidents she did not give any. She did bring it up once or twice more at another staff call. I have no knowledge whatsoever that she instructed the brigade leaders of the battalions to check their soldiers to prevent further abuses of this nature. I



do know that she put out a policy letter right after the incident which discussed detainee abuse, and that was disseminated.

I would not consider myself as part of the "tight knit" group of the senior leaders within the 800<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade. I am the new guy. Peer staff officers call each other by their first names. A "go to" person in the 800<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade is a hard question. Maybe the Chaplain, maybe Colonel [REDACTED], maybe Colonel [REDACTED]. I do not have a "go to" person. I do not go to the CG with my personal issues.

The one recommendation that I would make would be reinforcement type of training. I also stressed standards and uniformity when I went up to the battalions.

I would like to add that as far a prisoner escapes and loss of accountability as soldiers, there is no excuse for prisoner escapes. The brigade had over 32,000 prisoners and only between 16 and 20 have escaped. Total adds up to about 35, and this is less than a decimal of a percent. I think overall the brigade did pretty well at maintaining accountability. Some of the escapes happened under the Iraqi corrections officers watch. I feel deeply saddened for the entire brigade and every soldier who was called up, deployed over here and built up camps from nothing and working hard all year long for these two incidents to completely tarnish everything they and the brigade has done. This includes building a corrections system from nothing to where it's at today. I think it's unfortunate that soldiers and some leaders make some terrible decisions that steered the course of our successful mission to overshadow that by a couple of incidents.

Those who committed need to be punished, and I guess there is more that we could have done at brigade level to help prevent that. There is always more that we could have done. I wish there was more that I could have done, and there probably was.

MG Taguba warned the respondent not to discuss his interview with anyone and let him know that he was subject to being recalled.

[The session closed at 1408 hours, 14 February 2004.]